

ON THE TRAIL OF THE PIONEERS

ROMANCE, TRAGEDY AND TRIUMPH
OF THE PATH OF EMPIRE

BY

JOHN T. FARIS

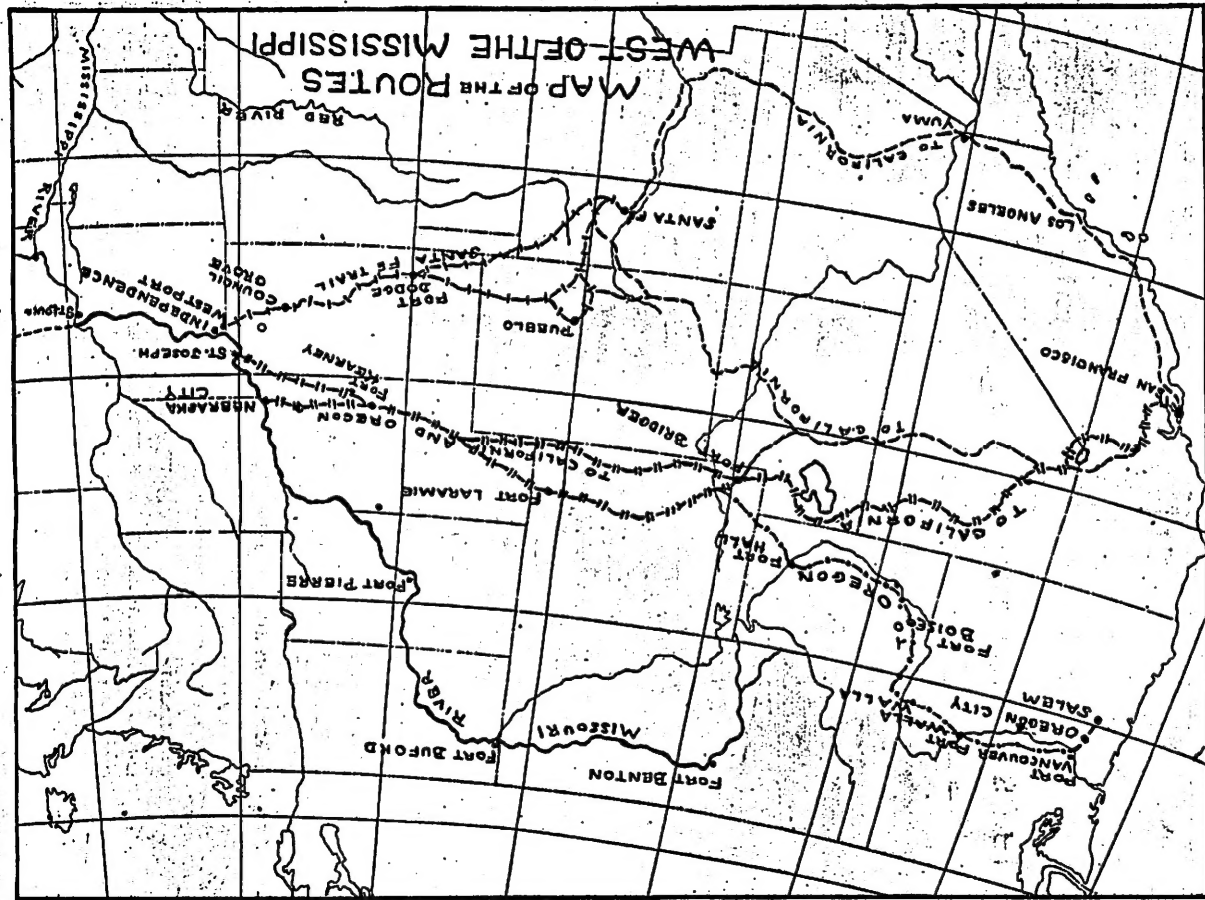
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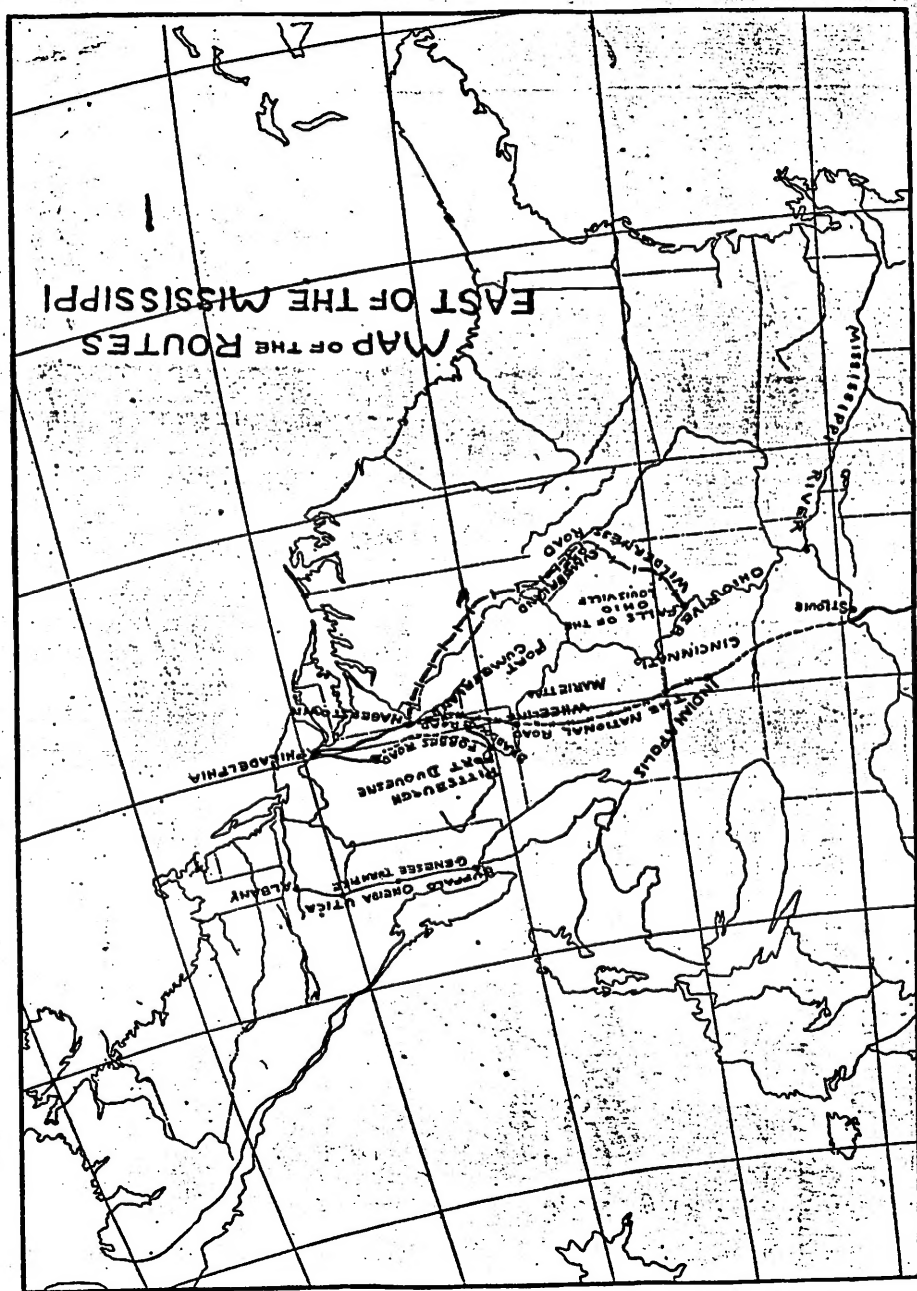
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NEW YORK

GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY





CHAPTER ONE: THROUGH CUMBERLAND GAP TO KENTUCKY AND TENNESSEE

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer, mightier world, varied world,
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the
march,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountain steep,
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown
ways,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the
mines within,
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

—WALT WHITMAN.

PREPARING THE WAY

Fair elbow-room for men to thrive in!
Wide elbow-room for work or play!
If cities follow, racing our footsteps,
Ever to westward shall point our way!
Rude though our life, it suits our spirit,
And new-born States in future years
Shall own us founders of a nation,
And bless the hardy pioneers.

—Charles Mackay.

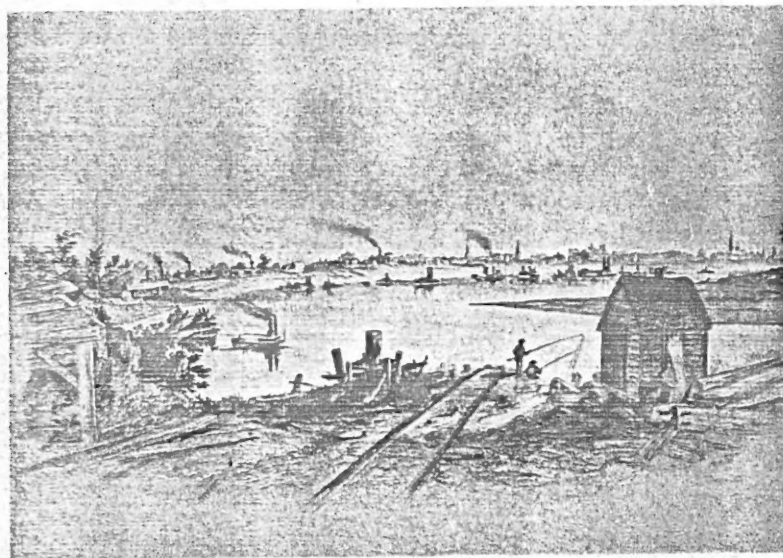
THERE is nothing more romantic in the story of the development of the United States than the records of the opening up of the great country between the western boundaries of North Carolina and Virginia and the Mississippi river. Inspiring tales of the adventures of daring explorers and picturesque stories of the struggles and triumphs of hardy emigrants clamor for the attention of those who delve into the early history of Kentucky and Tennessee. Yet the pioneers from whose journals and letters most of these narratives are gleaned, told them in such a matter-of-fact manner that sometimes more than one reading is necessary to appreciate the magnificent meaning of what to them was a commonplace story. The pioneers had been trained in such a hard school that they did not falter in the face of obstacles which, to the average man of to-day, would seem overwhelming. They had heard from their fathers and grandfathers of the conquest of the wilderness near the Atlantic seaboard, and they cast eager eyes to the region beyond the mountains whose mysteries they longed to explore, in whose fastnesses they dreamed of carving out a home.

The first men to respond to the appeal of the unknown



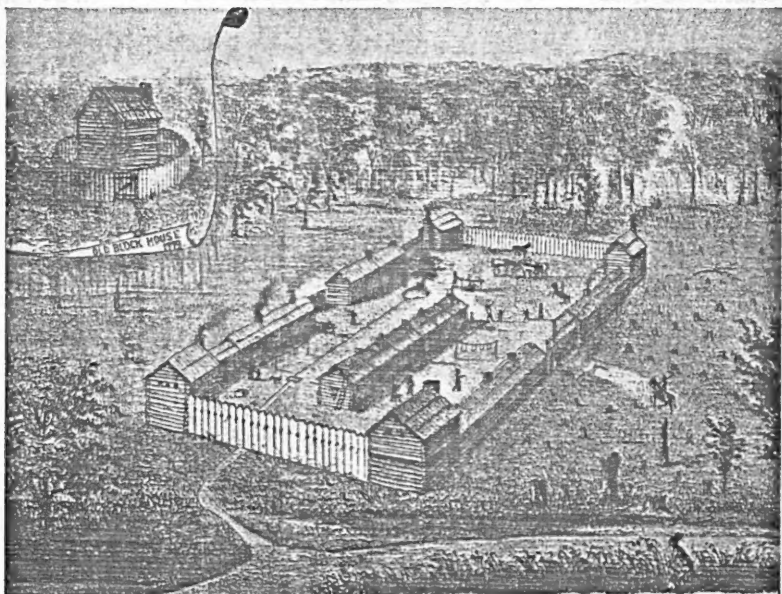
From an old print

ON THE ROAD IN EARLY DAYS

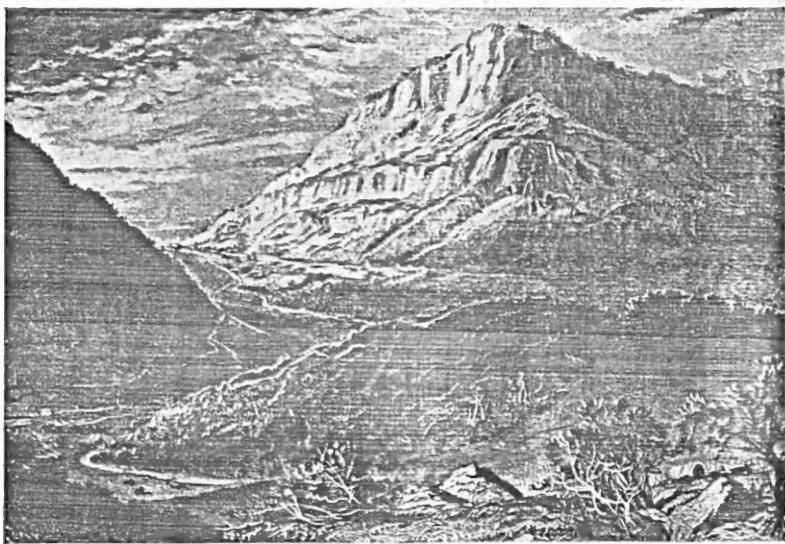


From "National Gallery of American Landscape"

EVANSVILLE, INDIANA, IN EARLY DAYS



From an old print reproduced in "The Magazine of American History"
THE OLD FORT AT LEXINGTON, BUILT IN 1782



CUMBERLAND GAP, TENNESSEE

From "Picturesque America"

CHAPTER TWO: THROUGH THE PITTSBURGH AND WHEELING GATEWAYS

CROSSING THE ALLEGHENIES

Now down the mountain's rugged western side,
Descending slow, our lowly travelers hied.
Deep in a narrow glen, within whose breast
The rolling fragments of the mountains rest;
Rocks tumbled on each other, by rude chance,
Crowned with gay fern, and mosses, meet the glance,
Through which a brawling river traced its way,
Dashing among the rocks in foaming spray.
Here, mid the fragments of a broken world,
In wild and rough confusion, idly hurled,
Where ne'er was heard the woodman's echoing stroke,
Rose a huge forest of gigantic oak,
With heads that towered half up the mountain side,
And arms extending round them far and wide,
They looked coeval with old mother Earth,
And seemed to claim with her an equal birth.

—JOHN KIRKE PAULDING.

CHAPTER THREE: FLOATING DOWN THE OHIO AND MISSISSIPPI

THE OHIO

Lo, our waiting ark is freighted;
In its depths of oak and pine
All our household treasures gathered,—
Thine, my humble friend, and mine.

Here the laughter-loving children
Gaze, with wonder-filling eyes,
With the maidens, whose emotions,
Like the waters, fall and rise.

Here are youths whose westward fancies
Claim the forest-sheltered game;
Here are men with soul and sinew
Which no wilderness can tame.

Here are matrons full of courage,—
Worthy these the pioneers,—
And the patriarch lends a sanction
In the wisdom of his years.

Ax and team, and plow and sickle,
In the hold are gathered all;
And, methinks, I hear the woodland,
Mid their thundering echoes, fall.

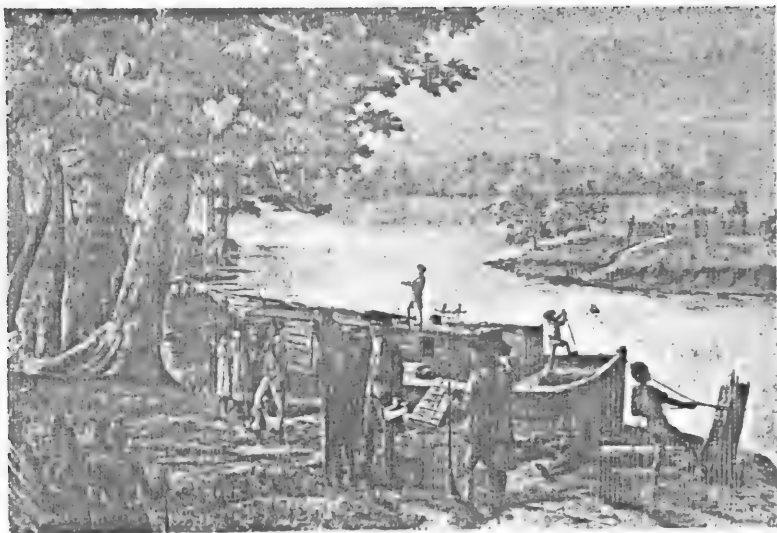
Draw the foot-board, loose the cables,
Free the wharf and man the oars;
Give the broad keel to the river,
Bid adieu to crowded shores.

—THOMAS BUCHANAN READ.



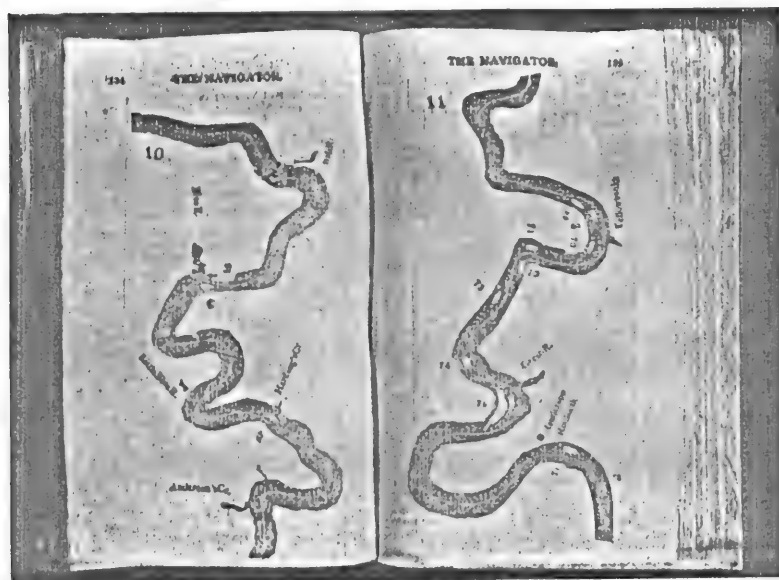
From an old print

FLOATING DOWN THE RIVER



Photographed for this volume from a painting in the possession of the Ohio Historical Society

GENERAL PUTNAM LANDING AT MARIETTA



From "The Navigator," 1811

TWO SECTIONS OF THE OHIO RIVER



*From Schoolcraft's "Historical Conditions and Prospects
of the Indians in the United States"*

OHIO RIVER FROM THE SUMMIT OF GRAVE CREEK MOUND



From "National Gallery of American Landscape"

WABASH RIVER, NEAR VINCENNES, INDIANA

CHAPTER FOUR: FROM NORTHERN NEW YORK AND NEW ENGLAND TO THE WEST

THE PRAIRIES

"I . . . think I hear

The sound of that advancing multitude
Which soon shall fill these deserts. From the ground
Comes up the laugh of children, the soft voice
Of maidens, and the sweet and solemn hymn
Of Sabbath worshipers. The low of herds
Blends with the rustling of a heavy grain
Over the dark brown furrows. All at once
A fresher wind sweeps by, and breaks my dream,
And I am in the wilderness alone.

—WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

I. THE LONG ROAD TO THE WESTERN RESERVE

Home is home, no matter where!
Sang a happy, youthful pair,
Journeying westward, years ago,—
As they left the April snow
White on Massachusetts' shore;
Left the sea's incessant roar,
Left the Adirondacks piled
Like the playthings of a child,
On the horizon's eastern bound;
And, the unbroken forests found,
Heard Niagara's sullen call,
Hurrying to his headlong fall,
Like a Titan in distress,
Tearing through the wilderness,
Bending earth apart, in hate
Of the unpitying hand of fate.

—Lucy Larcom.

A WRITER too modest to use his name has given the following characterization of the pioneer who conquered the wilderness:

The young American has inherited a genius for colonization. He has seen and learned by tradition of the growth of comfort, wealth and refinement, of the increased values of land, and the rapid rise of cities and acquisition of capital around him in his more easterly home. He starts out full of courage and hope, with no other capital than these qualities and his strong arm, to acquire the cheap land and build himself a home in the West. He leaves behind friends and kindred, resolved to achieve fortune and consequence, and then to return East to marry and carry his wife to the new land. He is enterprising and full of faith. He knows that his adopted State or Territory will soon become populous,

III. ALL THE WAY TO THE MISSISSIPPI

When the hill of toil was steepest,
When the forest-frown was deepest,
Poor, but young, you hastened here;
Came when solid hope was cheapest—
Came a pioneer.
Made the western jungle view
Civilization's charms;
Snatched a home for yours and you,
From the lean tree-arms.
Toil had never ceased to doubt you,—
Progress' path you helped to clear;
But To-day forgets about you,
And the world rides on without you—
Sleep, old pioneer!

—Will Carleton.

THOSE who were able to travel by canal boat were not so well prepared for the struggle of pioneer life on the Western Reserve as those who toiled through the almost unbroken wilderness during the first days of New Connecticut. These hardy emigrants took as a matter of course such experiences as that of Rev. Joseph Badger, the first minister in the section, who spent one night in a tall tree, tied to a limb by his bandana, lest he fall during sleep, while a bear kept company with his horse at the foot of the beech.

A settler who had gone a day's journey to get food for his family left his wife and children at home:

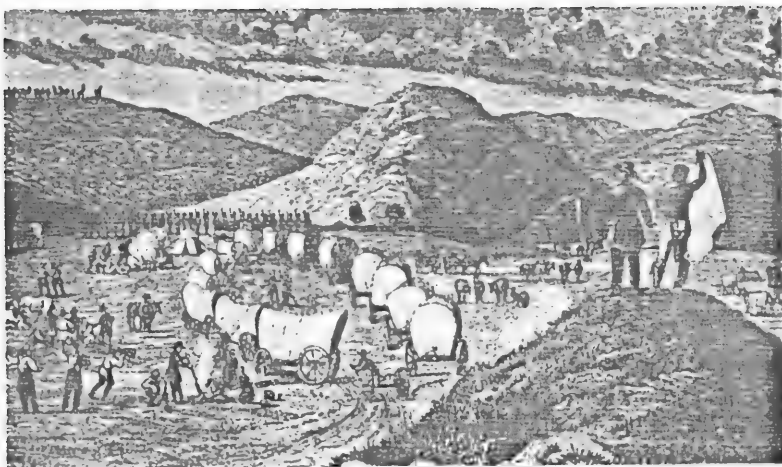
Before he left the cabin was made to look forsaken—as though the family had suddenly removed from it.²² Cooking utensils and such other implements as they possessed were hid in the woods. No fire was kindled. The slabs, split out of logs with the axe—called puncheons—which had been laid down as a floor, were taken up and thrown

CHAPTER FIVE: THE SANTA FE TRAIL

THE SANTA FÉ TRAIL

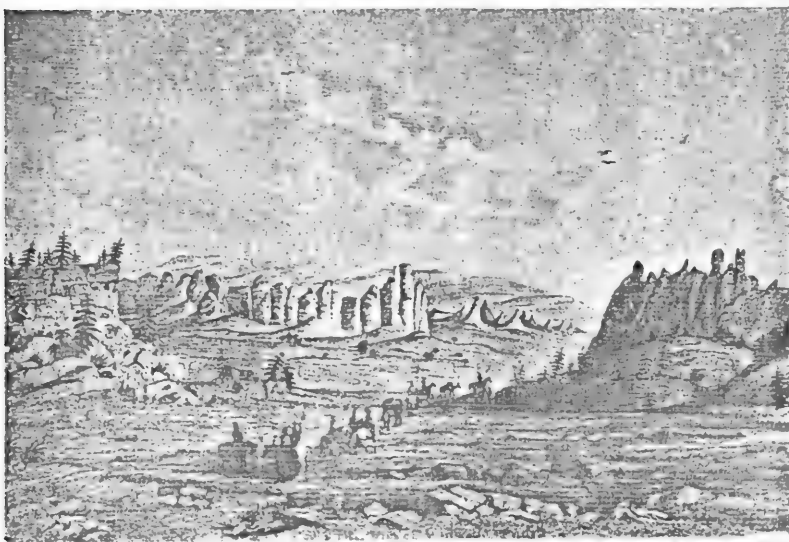
It wound through strange scarred hills, down cañons lone
Where wild things screamed, with winds for company;
Its milestones were the bones of pioneers,
Bronzed, haggard men, often with thirst a-moan,
Lashed on their beasts of burden toward the sea:
An epic quest it was of elder years,
For fabled garden or for good, red gold,
The trail men strove in days of iron to hold.
To-day the steam god thunders through the vast,
While dominant Saxons from the hurtling trains
Smile at the aliens, Mexic, Indian,
Who offer wares, sun-colored, like their past;
Dread dramas of immitigable plains
Rebuke the softness of the modern man;
No menace, now, the desert's mood of sand;
Still westward lies a green and golden land,
For at the magic touch of water blooms
The wilderness, and where of yore the yoke
Tortured the toilers into dateless tombs,
Lo! brightsome fruits, to feed a mighty folk.

—RICHARD BURTON.



From Gregg's "Commerce of the Prairies"

WAGONS PARKED FOR THE NIGHT



From Schoolcraft's "Historical Conditions and Prospects of the Indians in the United States"

NEAR FORT DEFIANCE, NEW MEXICO

CHAPTER SIX: ALONG THE OREGON TRAIL

Westward the Oregon flows, and the Walleway and Owybee.
Eastward, with devious course, among the Wind-river
Mountains,

Through the Sweet-water Valley precipitate leaps the Ne-
braska;

And to the south, from Fontaine-qui-bout and the Spanish
sierras,

Fretted with sand and rocks, and swept by the wind of the
desert,

Numberless torrents, with ceaseless sound, descend to the
ocean,

Like the great chords of a harp, in loud and solemn vibrations.
Spreading between these streams are the wondrous, beautiful
prairies,

Billowy bays of grass ever rolling in shadow and sunshine,

Bright with luxuriant clusters of roses and purple amorphas.

Over them wandered the buffalo herds, and the elk and the
roebuck;

Over them wandered the wolves, and herds of riderless horses;

Fires that blast and blight, and winds that are weary with
travel;

Over them wander the scattered tribes of Ishmael's children,
Staining the desert with blood; and above their terrible war-
trails

Circles and sails aloft, on pinions majestic, the vulture,

Like the implacable soul of a chieftain slaughtered in battle,

By invisible stairs ascending and scaling the heavens.

Here and there rise groves from the margin of swift-running
rivers;

And the grim, taciturn bear, the anchorite monk of the desert,
Climbs down their dark ravines to dig for roots by the brook-
side,

While over all is the sky, the clear and crystalline heaven,

Like the protecting hand of God inverted above them.

—HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

III. WITH FRANCIS PARKMAN ON THE TRAIL

They knew no dread of danger
When rose the Indian's yell,
Right gallantly they struggled,
Right gallantly they fell:
From Alleghany's summit
To the farthest western shore
These brave men's forms are lying
Where they perished in their gore;
And not a single monument
Is seen in all the land,
In honor of the memory
Of that heroic band.

—Charles A. Jones.

No picture of the Oregon Trail is complete without a reference to Francis Parkman's masterly description of the first stages of the journey:¹⁹

Last spring, 1846, was a busy season in the city of St. Louis. Not only were emigrants from every part of the country preparing for the journey to Oregon and California, but an unusual number of traders were making ready their wagons and outfits for Santa Fé. The hotels were crowded, and the gunsmiths and saddlers were kept constantly at work in providing arms and equipment for the different parties of travellers. Almost every day steamboats were leaving the levee and passing up the Missouri, crowded with passengers on the way to the frontier.

In one of these, the *Radnor*, . . . my friend and relative, Quincy A. Shaw, and myself left St. Louis on the twenty-fifth of April on a tour of curiosity and amusement to the Rocky Mountains. The boat was loaded until the water broke alternately over her guards. Her upper deck was covered with large wagons of a peculiar form, for the Santa Fé trade, and the hold was crammed with goods for

ing. My family are still on the east side and I—— S—— with his teams. We witnessed the scene, and could do nothing. Mrs. Sands, the baby and next youngest were all under water, but the men of the boat got into the river and took them out, and the rest of the family got up on the wagon cover and saved themselves from drowning. Mr. R jumped overboard and thought he could swim to shore, but he was drowned. . . . By the assistance of one of the other boats the rest were saved, but we thought from where we were that it was impossible, that they could all be saved. Well, I paid a man fifteen cents for taking my wife and little children across in a skiff. They have no skiff at the ferry, but they have three good ferry boats that they work by hand. But the men here are as near heathen as they can be, and they go for shaving the emigrants.

The figures of emigration along the Trail from 1841 to 1852 has been carefully compiled.²³

At the close of 1841 there were in Oregon, Americans					400
The number of emigrants during 1842 was					105 to 137
"	"	"	"	1843	875 to 1,000
"	"	"	"	1844	700
"	"	"	"	1845	3,000
"	"	"	"	1846	1,350
"	"	"	"	1847	4,000 to 5,000
"	"	"	"	1848	700
"	"	"	"	1849	400
"	"	"	"	1850	2,000
"	"	"	"	1851	1,500
"	"	"	"	1852	2,500

And as a result of this steady inflow of the virile population of the East, Oregon became American territory. Benton²⁴ called attention to the fact that the Oregon emigration from the United States "was not an act of government leading the people and protecting them, but, like all the other great emigrations and settlements of that race (Anglo-Saxon) on our continent, it was the act of the people, going forward without government aid or countenance, establish-

CHAPTER SEVEN: ACROSS THE PLAINS TO CALIFORNIA

CROSSING THE PLAINS

What great yoked brutes with briskets low,
With wrinkled neck of buffalo,
With round, brown, liquid, pleading eyes,
That turned so slow and sad to you,
That shone like love's eyes soft with tears,
That seemed to plead, and make replies,
The while they bowed their necks and drew
The creaking load; and looked at you.
Their sable briskets swept the ground,
Their cloven feet kept sober sound.

Two sullen bullocks led the line,
Their great eyes shining bright like wine;
Two sullen captive kings were they,
That had in time held herds at bay,
And even now they crushed the sod
With stolid sense of majesty,
And stately stepped and stately trod,
As if 'twere something still to be
Kings even in captivity.

—JOAQUIN MILLER.

CHAPTER EIGHT: TOILING UP THE MISSOURI

TO THE WEST

To the West! to the West! to the land of the free,
Where the mighty Missouri rolls down to the sea,
Where a man is a man if he's willing to toil,
And the humblest may gather the fruits of the soil,
Where children are blessings, and he who hath most
Hath aid to his fortune and riches to boast;
Where the young may exult, and the aged may rest,
Away, far away, to the land of the West.

To the West! to the West! where the rivers that flow,
Run thousands of miles, spreading out as they go;
Where the green waving forests that echo our call,
Are wide as old England, and free to us all!
Where the prairies, like seas where the billows have roll'd,
Are broad as the kingdoms and empires of old;
And the lakes are like oceans in storms or in rest—
Away, far away, to the land of the West.

To the West, to the West, there is wealth to be won,
The forest to clear is the work to be done;
We'll try it, we'll do it, and never despair,
While there's light in the sunshine and breath in the air.
The bold independence, that labor shall buy,
Shall strengthen our hands and forbid us to sigh;
Away! far away! let us hope for the best!
And build up new homes, in the land of the West.

—CHARLES MACKAY.

III. EARLY STEAMBOATING ON THE MISSOURI

Ay, this is freedom!—these pure skies
Were never stained with village smoke;
The fragrant wind, that through them flies,
Is breathed from wastes by plow unbroke.
Here, with my rifle and my steed,
And her who left the world for me,
I plant me, where the red deer feed
In the green desert—and am free.

—William Cullen Bryant.

THE first steamboat appeared on the Missouri in 1819. This was the *Independence*, which ascended the stream about two hundred miles. The *Western Engineer*, a government boat, went as far as Council Bluffs the same year. Fifteen years passed before the *Assiniboine* reached a point about a hundred miles above the Yellowstone. In 1853 the *El Paso* ventured one hundred and twenty-five miles farther. In the spring of 1859 the American Fur Company's steamer *Chippewa* ascended to within fifteen miles of Fort Benton, a point 3,560 miles from the sea, and 2,565 feet above sea level. In 1860 the same vessel reached Fort Benton itself, and in 1866 a steamer reached a point thirty-one miles above Fort Benton.

William Cobbet, the English traveler, who published in 1818 an account of his visit to the United States,⁴ told of seeing at Wheeling, on the Ohio river, a steamboat destined for Missouri river transportation:

The wheels are made to work in the stern of the boat, so as not to come in contact with the floating trees, snags, planters, trees tumbled headlong and fixed in the river, &c., obstructions most likely very numerous in that river.